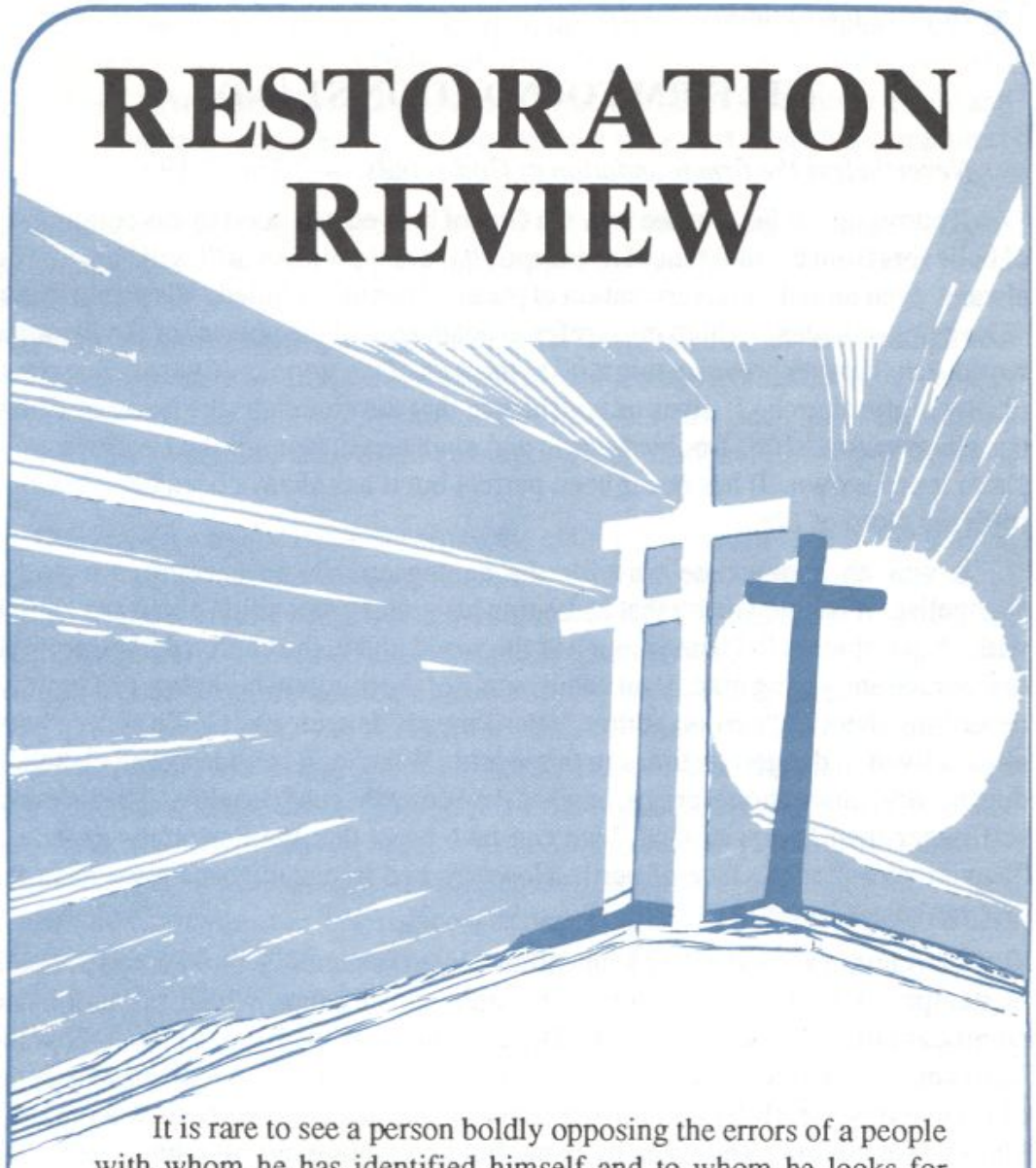
RESTORATION REVIEW



It is rare to see a person boldly opposing the errors of a people with whom he has identified himself and to whom he looks for support. If such a person appears he is soon frowned upon. It usually happens that he must lay his hand upon his mouth or embrace the privilege of walking out of doors.—Alexander Campbell

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The Hope of the Believer … No. 18

THE FIRM FOUNDATION STANDS

Nevertheless the firm foundation of God stands. —2 Tim. 2:19

It buoys up our hope to see how the God of heaven has stood by his community of believers from the moment of its inception. Jesus' promise of "I will be with you always, even unto the consummation of the age" has never failed. His promise that "The gates of hades," which must refer to death and all the powers of the demonic world, "shall never prevail against it" assures us of the inviolability and indestructibility of the church. It gives us confidence that the church as the Body of Christ has always been in this troubled world and always will be until the Lord comes to claim it as his own. It has never been perfect but it has always been here, holding forth the word of life.

It was an appropriate way for the ageing apostle to encourage a young evangelist It is noteworthy that he begins his grand proposition about the church with "Nevertheless." There is much in the world and in the church that might well discourage any young man. Paul names some of the things in his letters to Timothy, describing them as "perilous times." Peril means dangerous. God's people have always lived in dangerous times in this world. Whether it is widespread disbelief, degeneracy, international crises, or what Paul describes as "people will be lovers of self rather than lovers of God," we can take heart that the Scriptures give us a "Nevertheless" in the face of peril. However bad things may seem we have the "Nevertheless" promises.

The church as God's sure foundation keeps on standing, and Paul says that it is stamped with a seal, a common metaphor in his day, which points to two significant truths. The first is that "The Lord knows those that are his." That the Lord knows and loves his church, that he is intimately involved with it as the apple of his eye is wonderfully comforting. Others may question our faith, but the Lord knows. He not only knows us by name but he knows every thought, intent, and desire of our hearts. What is mind-boggling about this inscription is that it reads in the original Greek, "That the Lord *knew* those that are his," indicating as the Scriptures often do that God called each one that is his even from eternity. What a breath-taking truth that each of us is part of God's eternal plan!

The rest of the seal reads “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” Here is a truth that the church has difficulty really believing and practicing, as is evidenced by its behavior through the ages, and that is that it is to be “a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). In a world made filthy by sin and corruption the church is to be clean. So reads its seal.

There have always been such ones upon the earth, ever since Pentecost, those that the Lord knows to be his and who have that “holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” And this is the Body of Christ in the world. Its foundation is sure and firm; it is inviolable and eternal. What a blessing to be part of such a community of believers!

Some 2,000 years ago that church grew out of a small band of ragtag disciples who followed an itinerate rabbi who had no place to lay his head. It began not in Greece or Rome but in a small and obscure province called Judea. But it was destined to become more numerous and more widespread than any other religion in the history of the world. In spite of incredible competition from other religions that were older, wealthier, and more numerous the Christian faith reached out into all the world so that today one-third of all humankind claims to be followers of Jesus of Nazareth.

One reason why the Bible describes the church as the firm foundation may be because of its incredible capacity to renew and reform itself after periods of stagnation and to endure periods of severe and prolonged persecution. The opening up of Eastern Europe is a good example, for in spite of all the atheistic assault upon the church under Communism the church not only kept its faith but was one reason why Communism failed. In Russia, for instance, Stalin murdered millions of Christians, destroyed thousands of churches, and declared the church an illegal entity. He demolished the largest and most richly decorated church in all Russia, the Church of Christ the Savior near the Kremlin. He intended to build a great Soviet palace in its place, with his own statue fixed atop its dome, symbolizing the victory of atheistic Communism. The palace was never built, and today statues of Stalin have been toppled all across the Soviet union —and Christianity is again declared legal!

While the Russian Orthodox Church lost tens of millions of members during the Communist reign of terror, they still number more than 50 million and they are now reopening their churches. Protestant churches, which were also decimated and outlawed, account for millions more, and they are again free to worship publicity and preach the gospel. After seventy years of atheistic domination Russia is still “a Christian nation.” It survived by going underground, with secret meetings and prayer groups in homes,

workplaces, and even university dormitories. Even Mikhail Gorbachev admits to being a baptized Christian, and while he had to repudiate his heritage to be a member of the Communist Party and earn plum jobs, some believe that he is secretly a Christian, as is his mother who continues to attend church, and as were his grandparents who in the Stalin era hid the cross and icons behind pictures of Lenin and Stalin.

The story of the indestructible church is repeated over and over through the centuries. When Rome burned in 64 A. D., which was probably the work of emperor Nero himself since he wanted an excuse for rebuilding the city, the emperor blamed it on the Christians. He set out to destroy the church. He not only arrested and imprisoned believers, but hundreds were put to death amidst mockery. They were torn to death by dogs, crucified, and set on fire so that when darkness came they burned like torches in the night. Nero's power was such that many believed that he would come back from the dead to rule again, and he believed that while Christ's name would soon be forgotten his would be immortal. The verdict of history: while countless millions wear the name of Christ only dogs wear the name of Nero. And one of Nero' s own successors as emperor not only became a Christian but declared it a recognized religion of the empire!

But Armenia, whose capital is at the foot of Mt. Ararat, was the first nation to adopt the Christian faith as its official religion, and it is that nation that has suffered the most for its faith. Early this century the Turks attempted genocide against the Armenians, an atrocious effort to wipe out the entire population. The Armenian church separated itself from Rome and became an independent church as early as 451, and it has repeatedly endured attacks against it all through the centuries, including the Turkish genocide attempt. Today it is one of those republics within the Soviet Union that is standing tall and demanding freedom. And the Armenian Christian Church lives on, vibrant with hope.

The church has sometimes been at the brink of what appeared to be total collapse. Such a time was the early centuries of the Middle Ages when the barbarian invaders swarmed over what was once the proud Holy Roman Empire, and the Moslems, by the power of the sword, were turning millions in Africa and Asia to the Islamic religion. Even the papacy had little power. The church was assailed by moral and political corruption from within and by military might from without. While Christianity declined, Islam became the dominant religion of the world until it was finally checked on the battlefields of what is now France under the leadership of warrior-chieftain Charles Martel.

While Islam ruled by the might of the sword the church quietly and secretly nurtured its scholars and reformers, mainly in monasteries where the Scriptures continued to be studied, translated, and preserved. It was in such monasteries as Cluny in France and its many daughter houses that the deep spiritual life of devotion was both preserved and disseminated. Cluny became the focal point of a new reform movement in the tenth century. There was occasionally a spiritual, reform-minded pope, such as Gregory VII in the eleventh century. In the twelfth century came Francis of Assisi and dozens of such orders as the Franciscans and the Dominicans, all committed to spiritual renewal.

But corruption and heresy from within and political intrigue from without (church and state had a volatile alliance) continued to plague the church. While there were Abelard and Aquinas to keep theological studies alive in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the church in general lost its zeal both for reform and missions. While there were now and again minor reform efforts, such as the Waldensians, and while there were always friars (brothers) in the various orders that worked for spiritual renewal, something major needed to take place to solidify the firm foundation of God.

Then came Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, which not only changed the church but civilization itself. While this in time spawned multiple denominations, Christianity grew and flourished. The sixteenth century also produced the “radicals,” called restitutionists or restorationists, which were not satisfied with Luther’s and Calvin’s reformation. They wanted to return to the roots of the faith and restore the primitive church. These were the Anabaptists and their offspring, which included many modern movements, such as the Amish, Mennonites, Quakers, and English Baptists. Since there is no way to agree on exactly what the “restored church” should be restorationism has resulted in many divisions and subdivisions.

Amidst all this division and diversity there was vitality of faith. The church, even if imposed upon by factionalism, was still the Body of Christ in the world, God’s indestructible firm foundation.

In the nineteenth century our own people emerged in the Stone-Campbell unity movement, which took elements from both the reformation and the restoration movements, but it was primarily of the mainline Protestant reformation tradition.

As we look back over 2,000 years of church history one vital truth is evident, the firm foundation of God, which is Christ’s Body upon earth, keeps on standing. When we look at civilization as a whole, we see that the Christian faith has been the most enduring and the

most dominant religion. When we look at individual nations, including those states where all the powers of Satan conspired to decimate the church —whether pagan Rome, Czarist Russia, Turkish Armenia, Nazi Germany, or the Communist Soviet Republics— we see that the church not only survived but prospered. The most hardened pagan rulers, bent on prolonged persecution, are destined to accept the fact that the church is not going to go away.

And it all began with the simple creed that Jesus is Lord. It is that that is indestructible. It was for that great truth that they laid down their lives. It is the joy of the risen Christ that will not and cannot die. The firm foundation, the church of Jesus Christ, is rooted in Christ himself. Since Christ is with and in his community of believers it will stand as long as the world stands, even if hell itself contrives against it. And in God's tomorrow it will live on forever, joining the triumphant church that already basks in the glory of another world.

Faith of our fathers, living still
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword:
O how our hearts beat high with joy,
When-e're we hear that glorious word:
Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death. —the Editor

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REASONS FOR NOT LEAVING AN "UNFAITHFUL" CHURCH

I use the term "unfaithful" advisedly, for a church is not unfaithful just because someone supposes it is. Such terms as liberal, fundamentalist, charismatic, legalistic, institutional might be used just as well, for people question a church's faithfulness on all these grounds and more, depending on their perspective. And so they leave an "unfaithful" church and start a "faithful" one. This is the story behind our many divisions all through the years, not only among ourselves but among Christendom at large.

An assumed mandate to start a "true" church is behind most all the divisions within Christianity. A group of Episcopalians, led by a few bishops, have recently started a true Episcopal church because the main body has begun ordaining women to the ministry. A

generation ago a noted professor at Princeton Seminary, J. Gresham Machen, walked out of his Presbyterian denomination and started both a new seminary and a new denomination. Princeton had become too “liberal.” Since then the Missouri Synod Lutherans had a similar experience over the same issue. The same liberal-fundamentalist controversy has all but divided the Southern Baptist Church. On and on it goes, division after division, among virtually all sects and denominations.

The reason is basically the same. They are leaving an “unfaithful” church, for whatever reason, and starting a faithful one. It is this mentality, productive of so much pain and trauma, that I question in this essay. I am going to argue that there are good reasons, scriptural ones, not to leave an “unfaithful” church. My thesis is that this is both divisive and sinful, for it runs counter to our Lord’s prayer for the unity of his people. I further contend that every congregation is “unfaithful” on some counts, for none is perfect, and that anyone can find a “reason” for leaving a church if she wants to leave. My point in this article is that one does not have to leave and that the biblical mandate is to stay, in most instances at least.

I am aware that we have to establish an irreducible minimum for a true church, for any church must have some basic loyalties before it can be considered a true church of Jesus Christ, even if it is “unfaithful” in some respects. A basic standard has to be recognized or we should not be in said church to start with. I would say this is loyalty to Jesus Christ. But I would say more, borrowing this time from John Calvin: a true church is one that preaches and teaches the word of God and practices the ordinances of the Lord’s Supper and baptism. There may be flaws and errors in both the teaching and the ordinances, but there is at least a sincere effort to communicate the Holy Scriptures and the ordinances are practiced in one way or another.

This standard excludes all cults and some sects. A Christian should not be in such a “church” (?) to start with. If one is in such a cult or sect and considers himself a Christian, he should leave and find a community that is loyal to Jesus Christ, honors the Scriptures, and practices the ordinances. Once he does this he will never have to leave said church so long as it is true to the basics, not even if in time he discovers it is in some ways an “unfaithful” church.

I am not talking about leaving a denomination or a congregation because one just doesn’t seem to fit and he believes he can serve God better elsewhere. That is leaving because of incompatibility, and we all understand that, considering all our mutual hangups and prejudices. And sometimes it is for racial, linguistic, or cultural reasons that one leaves

one church and goes to another. I am talking about leaving because you do not consider it a true church and you are going to start a true one of your own. That is what is behind sectism and denominationalism.

By and large all churches are true churches in the sense that I have described. In my hometown of Denton, Texas I have over the past several years visited every congregation of every sect and denomination that has a building, along with a few that do not, 70 in all, and I was impressed by how much we all have in common, except for two or three sects or cults. All the mainline churches meet Calvin's (and my own) irreducible minimum for a true church. They all teach and preach the Bible, and only the Bible, as the Holy Scriptures; they all "call upon the name of the Lord," the standard repeatedly referred to in Scripture; and they all practice the ordinances of Communion and baptism.

But are they all also "unfaithful"? Yes, all of them, in one way or another, including the one where I am a member. Especially in being lukewarm, inert, and indifferent. I found very few congregations filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, almost none with a passion for Christian unity, and too few that appeared committed to evangelism or concerned about poverty, racism, and injustice, especially in the Third World.

It could well be argued that every true church in the history of Christianity has also been an unfaithful church in at least some respects. It was the case with the apostolic churches. Paul came down hard on the churches in Galatia and Corinth. He made some harsh judgments, such as "I cannot speak to you as spiritual people but carnal" (1 Cor. 3:1). Carnal? That means they were of the flesh, and yet the apostle refers to them as "the church of God" and as "the Body of Christ" in whom the Holy Spirit dwelt. That made them a true church of Christ! But still they were seriously wrong about some things Paul considered important. So with the Galatians whom he described as "O foolish Galatians" (Gal. 3:1) and "You have fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). Still they were the churches of Christ of Galatia and he calls them his "brethren" over and over again.

This is one good reason for not leaving an unfaithful church. Paul did not tell the "sound" and "faithful" ones in the Roman and Galatian churches to leave and start a sound, faithful church. They were rather to hang in, stay where they were, and help to make the church all that it should be. We can all make a congregation more faithful by being faithful ourselves.

The same is true with the prophets of the Old Testament, such as those who preached against the (Jewish) church in Jerusalem. Isaiah told them that they were as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah, Jeremiah insisted that God would not even listen to their prayers, and Habakkuk pled with God to mix mercy with his wrath. But no prophet ever told the faithful to leave God's own people and start another church or build another altar or erect a different temple. In all the apostolic letters the faithful are never told to separate themselves from the unfaithful, however wayward a church became. Even the Lord himself when he wrote to a church that he called "dead" urged the few faithful ones that he called "worthy" to keep on walking with him in white (Rev. 3:1-4). Why didn't he tell them to leave and start a faithful church?

When I say these things, someone will invariably quote Rev. 18:4, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins." But that is talking about coming out of pagan Rome with all of its idolatry. Nowhere in Scripture is there the slightest suggestion that part of God's people should separate themselves from other of God's people —for any reason!

The most important reason for not leaving, however, is Jesus' teaching on the true nature of the kingdom of God, that it is made up of the good and bad, the true and false, the faithful and unfaithful, and that we do not have to make such judgments as "leaving an unfaithful church." This teaching is evident not only in the letter to the church at Sardis but in several parables.

The first is in Mt. 3:12 where Jesus is described as having the winnowing fan in his hand, and "He will purge his threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the bam; but He will bum up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The scene is the Last Judgment. The threshing floor is his kingdom or church or those who profess to be his followers. They remain together in their earthly sojourn, wheat and chaff together, only to be separated by the Lord in the judgment.

Other parables define this truth even more. In Mt. 13:47 Jesus teaches that the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that is cast into the sea and gathers some of every kind. He went on to tell how fishermen have their nets full of both good and bad, and once on shore they separate them. "So it will beat the end of the age," the parable goes on to say, "The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire."

Then there is the parable in Mt. 13:24 that likens the kingdom to a farmer who sowed seed in his field. His enemy came while his servants slept and sowed tares among the wheat. When the grain sprouted and made a crop, the tares also appeared. The servants told their master and asked if they should pull up the tares. The master told them, “No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

Isn’t Jesus teaching that this is the way it will be in his church on earth? You are not going to have a church that is all wheat. The enemy is sure to sow tares, and so the good and the bad, the faithful and the unfaithful will be in the church. So be it, Jesus is saying, and don’t worry about it, for I will make what separations need to be made in the judgment. You don’t have to leave because of the tares!

Jesus goes on to ask his disciples if they understood what he was saying. They said they did, which may or may not be the way it was. But it is apparent that we have not understood it, nor has the church through the ages. We have kept ourselves busy trying to root out the tares! Or to walk off and leave them, as if we can judge aright between tares and wheat. When we walk out and start a “loyal church” we are as likely to take with us as many tares as wheat.

Let them grow together!, the parable says, stating one of the most revolutionary truths of all the Bible. We can grow beautifully as wheat among the tares! In fact we don’t have to make any judgments as to who is true wheat and who isn’t. We don’t have to worry about it. We can grow and bloom and bear fruit where we have been planted, and be hanged with the tares. We don’t have to leave in order to be good wheat. We don’t have to do any separating or any judging. The Lord will do all that in his own time, and he can do it better than we can anyhow.

Isn’t it great to be free like that! So free that we don’t have to take off looking for a church that has no tares. —*the Editor*

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WHO OWNS HEAVEN?

Recently I was visiting a longtime reader of this journal who runs a funeral home in Missouri, started by his grandfather in 1917. The home is something of a tradition in this small town. As we discussed changes that funerals have taken over the past two generations I told my friend of a lady I once met in a back room of a funeral home in California. I came upon her quite by accident since I was casually walking about the place while my host, the funeral director, was busy on the phone.

A lovely lady she was, only 62, and character graced her face even in death. In fact she didn't appear to be dead, maybe not even asleep, but only lying there with her eyes closed. A dim light shone near her head. The room was still and quiet. I found myself visiting with her as I lingered beside her coffin. It was not an unpleasant experience. I sensed that she must have been a fine person in her sojourn in this world. The body even in death can speak of the character of the one who once lived there.

When I asked my friend about her I learned that I was her only visitor and that there would be no others. She had no relatives who were close enough or cared enough to attend her funeral. She had died in a nursing home, unknown and unloved. An attorney who cared for her small estate arranged for her burial, all by phone. In fact the mortician and an assistant would alone bury her, a "Christian burial" he assured me.

That experience so impressed me that it would have inspired a poem had I been a poet. Instead I wrote an essay on "The Woman I Cannot Forget" which appeared in this journal in 1974, which was in part an appeal to the churches to be more sensitive to those in nursing homes who have to die alone.

When I told that story to my Missouri mortician friend, he said to my surprise, "Then you might like to meet Vivian." He took me to the visitation room where this 70-year old woman was laid out with all the loving care of a conscientious funeral home. As we stood beside her casket he introduced me to her, quite seriously and almost formally. We talked almost as if it were a three-way conversation, though Vivian did not say all that much. The mortician, a devout Christian, wondered if Vivian might know what was going on. I ventured that it was more than possible, and that she was likely pleased that we would visit with her like this.

Unlike the California woman Vivian was active to the end and she by no means died alone, even if her life was a troubled one. She was raised in the Church of Christ but had not been an active member. She had gone through four marriages, and she fell dead on a dance floor. Before I learned all this I thought I detected what Thoreau called "quiet desperation" etched in her face. She died having never been able to get life together, I figured, and I felt compassion for her. I could hear her telling me, "Nothing ever went right for me. Marriage after marriage. Job after job. Nothing. And I tried everything, including religion."

While we lingered at her side I told my friend that there is no way for us to judge in such matters. Only God knows the heart, and only he knows the reasons why we are the way we are. It might well be that if we had been in Vivian's shoes we would not have done as well as she did. Some people seem to get the short end of the stick all through life. God knows and he will judge accordingly, and we can all pray as did the lowly publican in Jesus' story, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

My friend seemed impressed with the way I related to Vivian, so he wanted to tell me a story.

There was this black preacher who conducted a funeral in his chapel for a man, also black, who was shot to death in a saloon brawl. The man had lived on the dark side of life and died that way. The preacher told the mourners, "We all know how he lived and we know how he died, but I'm not here to pass judgment on him. I don't own heaven and I don't own hell. I'm not in charge of heaven, so I can't say who goes there and who don't. God owns heaven and he says who goes there and who don't, and at this funeral we're going to leave it right there."

The black brother said it well. White folks and black folks alike sometime forget that it is the God of heaven and him alone who is sovereign over people's souls. And if we turn up surprised over the weird people who come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the eternal kingdom, folk that are not supposed to be there as we see it, that too will be good for us.

We will at last have learned who owns heaven. Not an unimportant truth to learn either in this world or the next. —*the Editor*

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Heroes and Reformers of History … No. 8

JOHN KNOX: THE THUNDERING SCOT

When they laid the body of John Knox to rest in his native Scottish soil a nobleman was heard to say, “Here lies one who neither flattered nor feared any flesh.” It was a fitting epitaph for “the thundering Scot,” as he came to be called. As Scotland’s greatest churchman and one of the most colorful figures in the history of the Reformation, he cried out against the sins of both church and state with rare courage. It is a wonder that he escaped martyrdom and lived to die a natural death in 1572 at age 60, which was an advanced age back in the those days.

His courage was matched only by the woman who ruled Scotland in those days, and who at last was executed in “the Tower” in London for supposedly plotting against Queen Elizabeth. It is said that Mary Queen of Scots feared no one - no one that is except John Knox, who showed no respect of persons in his thunderbolts against pride, injustice, and idolatry. To him the Roman Catholic mass was idolatry. In its place he sought to put the simple serving of the Lord’s supper in every Scottish church on every Lord’s day. He led the fight against the pope and his Scottish bishops in the struggle that finally made Scotland Protestant. That small nation today has a Protestant state church (Presbyterian) due largely to the work of Knox.

In the early years of his reform efforts the French Catholics, who at the time ruled Scotland, forced him to serve as a galley slave. He was chained to his bench where he ate, slept, and worked the oars under the threat of the lash, and where many died under intolerable conditions. The guards added to the misery by pushing pictures of the Virgin Mary into the faces of the slaves, calling for mocked kisses.

On one occasion Knox stripped the picture from its pole, tore it to bits, and threw it into the sea. The guards could do no more than to marvel at such uncommon courage.

His life as a galley slave must have been providential, for it not only stirred his righteous anger but disciplined him for the tortuous life that lay before him as a reformer. It also made him wiser. He learned how to survive. On one occasion when Knox was crying out against “the Paip’s” (pope’s) corruption and idolatry, the Catholic bishops plotted to do him in. Knox showed up at the appointed place, but he had with him a large company of influential noblemen!

John Knox started out as a priest in the Roman church, but as the winds of reform blew over Scotland he was affected by its influence. The winds blew from England (Henry VIII had broken with the pope), Germany (Luther's reformation was spreading over much of Europe), and Switzerland (Calvin and Zwingli had launched the "Reform" Protestant tradition). While Knox was influenced by Luther's writings, it was John Calvin who gave him his reformation theology. That is why Scotland is today Presbyterian (Reformed) rather than Lutheran. Calvin was Knox's mentor. He was with Calvin in Geneva for a time, where Calvin built his theocratic city.

But it was gut level stuff more than theology that made Knox the impassioned reformer that he became, such as when some of Scotland's most exemplary young princes of the church were burned at the stack for certain anti-Catholic sentiments. One such was Patrick Hamilton, now enshrined as one of the great martyrs in the history of the Church of Scotland. While Hamilton was studying in Paris he was influenced by Erasmus and read Luther's disputation with Eck over the selling of indulgences. He returned to Scotland and taught at the university at St. Andrews. He continued as an exemplary Catholic for some years, writing music for a Mass in the cathedral and himself acting as precentor. But he quietly passed along some of the things he had learned from Luther.

Cardinal Beaton, eager to show loyalty to the pope, carefully devised a plot to entrap the popular young professor. Spies gathered information which enabled the cardinal to condemn Hamilton as a heretic. Lest powerful forces come to his rescue the cardinal had a stake erected so that Hamilton could be burned immediately upon being condemned.

When young Hamilton stood before the stake he was given a chance to recant. What he said on the occasion has lived on as one of the Reformation's most shining moments. "For aye for your fire," he said, "I prefer to burn in your fire for obeying my conscience than to burn in the fire of hell for disobeying it."

Knox grew up hearing that story, and it especially influenced him when one of his own colaborers, George Wishart, met a similar fate, as did a number of Scottish reformers. Wishart cried out against the evils of Romanism in the streets of Scotland, and Knox, with sword in hand, stood as his body guard. It was a grave time for Scotland with all the political and religious unrest. The Protestant party demanded change, but Roman Catholicism still had the political advantage. In an effort to hold back the tide of reform the likes of Wishart had to be eliminated. One of his heresies was reading the New Testament in Greek to his students. Even though he was scholarly, humble, lovable, and anything but a dangerous man, Wishart had to die because he was a reformer. The

swordsman who served as his executioner deplored killing such a holy man, and he bowed down before Wishart asking his forgiveness. The condemned man kissed the executioner on the cheek as a token that he was forgiven and enjoined him to do his duty.

This is the stuff that made the Reformation in Scotland the dramatic story that it was. Knox was now a marked man. While it was his fate to be sentenced as a galley slave, he was able to return to Scotland and take up where Hamilton and Wishart left off, eventually overpowering the evils of Romanism and making Scotland Protestant and free. And he managed to escape both the stake and the sword, partly by winning rich and influential young noblemen to his side. He had such undaunted courage that the powers that be hesitated to lay hands on him. It is understandable that the symbol of Scotland's pride is the crouched lion. Knox, the thundering Scot, was like that crouched lion.

And yet, inspired by Wishart's lamb-like character, Knox's boldness was tempered by humility. One of the secrets of his influence was in persuading his fellow Scots to make every home in the realm an altar of God. He urged every father to be a priest in his own family by reading the Bible to and praying with his children. He was partly responsible for family worship becoming a longstanding tradition in Old Scotia.

Robert Bums, Scotland's noble bard who like Knox was born a peasant, captures the spirit of the tradition of family worship in his *The Cotter's Saturday Night,* part of which reads:

Then kneeling down, to heaven's eternal King
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope "springs exulting on trimphant wing,"
That thus they all shall meet in future days:

There ever bask in uncreated rays,

No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear.
Compared with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method and of art,
When men display to congregations wide

Devotion's every grace, except the heart!

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
that makes her loved at home, revered abroad;
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,

"An honest man's the noblest work of God."

— the Editor

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SLAVES AND UNBORN BABIES AS CHATTEL

Cecil Hook

The notable Dred Scott case brought before our courts in 1856-57 addressed the right of a Negro slave and his child born in free territory to become citizens of the United States. Scott sued for citizenship on the ground that he was taken from Missouri to live in the free territory of Minnesota, where his child was born, before being brought back to Missouri. The lower courts ruled that he had no standing before the court. On March 6,1857, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the lower court decision that Negro slaves and/or their descendants could not be citizens and that they had no rights before the court.

The written majority opinion was of more concern than the decision of the court. The opinion contended that Scott was mere chattel which might be dealt with by its owner as any other property. That historic opinion did much to widen the breach between North and South to hasten the Civil War.

A present-day case which also began in the courts of Missouri was decided by the U.S. Supreme Court on January 22, 1973. In effect, the decision of Roe vs. Wade was that an unborn child has no rights before the court and that it may be dealt with as nothing more than chattel.

Now, fortified by that decision, abortionists raise the popular cry that the unborn child is a part of the woman's body, that she has the right over her own body, and that she can deal with it as she pleases, even to the termination of its life.

With their humanitarian views, the abolitionists pressed for the human rights of slaves at a time when many of the citizens of our country denied that a Negro had a soul. He was not considered to be a human being.

Strangely, now those who contend for the equal rights for women, minorities, and blacks both in American and South Africa are denying that the unborn child has a soul or human rights. It is not considered to be a human being.

Although it is said to be a part of the woman's body, the fetus is not even esteemed as highly as an eye, a hand, or a finger. It would be considered inhuman to destroy one of those parts for any reason short of necessity. The fetus is given about the same

consideration as a tumor or an inflamed appendix. To sterilize a woman as a preventative to pregnancy is considered to be a destruction of her human rights, but to terminate her pregnancy is thought to be neither inhuman nor destructive of the infant's rights.
We hear little from the abortionists about the sins of fornication and adultery. Rather, they contend that freedom of sexual activity of the unwed is another human right which we dare not discourage. Promiscuity is encouraged by our society as a whole. With the abandonment of sexual morality has come a disregard for the life that results from the lack of sexual restraint. When we abandon the concept of sin, we deny responsibility.

Slave owners were "pro-choice," contending that the choice of whether to own slaves or not was a private and personal matter and that one's personal values should not be pushed onto others. The "pro-choice" ideology was urged to protect slavery then, and it is designed to destroy life now. God is "pro-choice" in that he demands that we choose to refrain from any sexual activity that might result in an unwanted pregnancy.

Both the slave and the fetus are human in essence, an essence which is not measured by degree of maturity, legal standing, or possession.

Who would have thought that, more than a century after the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil War, we would hear the infamous decision of the Dred Scott case revived so loudly and adamantly? Once it was the slave and his child who had no rights or soul; now it is the unborn child who has neither rights nor soul. In those times a master could deal with his slave as chattel; now the unborn is regarded as disposable property possessed by the mother —a part of her body which she can destroy without conscience. —*1350 Huisache. New Braunfels. Tx 78130*

ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN

None of our congregations practice all of those things that the early church practiced, and all of our churches practice some of the things not practiced then. Which of these things are parts of the "simple New Testament pattern?" Our sincere, constant debate over what the essential pattern consists of has resulted in many divisions. Our emphasis of details of lesser significance has caused us to destroy one of the primary, essential qualities of the church--its oneness, its unity. —Cecil Hook, *Free as Sons*

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HOW MUCH DOES THE PAYCHECK INFLUENCE WHAT IS SAID?

Someone tipped me off that a professor at Yale had made an unusual statement in *Christianity Today* about how the paycheck influences what preachers say and do not say to their churches. I went to the library at Dallas Christian College to check it out. This is what Jaroslav Pelican, longtime professor of history at Yale, said in an interview as he spoke of the needs of the church in our time:

> You have to give the church what it needs, not what it wants. And in order to do that you may have to leave its payroll. It hurts me to say this because I want to be part of a church where that doesn't have to be said. But show me one where it is not true.

Are ministers generally inclined to allow job security to influence them to tell their churches what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear? Pelican is saying that every church has things it needs to hear that it probably isn't hearing. A preacher cannot talk about those things that people don't want to hear but need to hear. If he does he is likely to be fired.

The professor, whose father and grandfather were ministers, says that it is painful to him to make such a charge, and he wishes it were otherwise. He would like to belong to a church where it was not true, but where is such a church, he asks. Can we point to Churches of Christ/Christian Churches as an exception?

I thought of Pelican's statement when an elder in a Church of Christ in a sincere effort to defend the minister said, "He has so many people to try to please." He was saying, in all innocence, that the preacher can't please everybody, so don't be hard on him. But did he realize what he was saying about preachers and preaching? Is the preacher to try to please anybody at all? Is that what he is up there for? Is that what preaching is about, pleasing people, pleasing anybody at all?

Occasionally some brave soul among us talks about preaching being prophetic. I think they mean by that that preaching is to be a call for repentance, for change, for renewal. The prophet cries out against the sins of the people, such as pride, luxury, and selfishness. His

preaching brings them before the judgment bar of God. Such as we have in Is. 58:1: “Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.”

The modem minister could respond the way Billy Graham did when someone criticized him for not crying out against the nation’s sins when he preaches in the White House and cavorts with presidents, reminding him of the way Old Testament prophets did. “I am not an Old Testament prophet,” he said.

But the Christian preacher is to be like the prophets in some ways. He is to “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2). That passage goes on to warn that some who have “itching ears” will call for teachers after their own desires. And Paul always seems to tie “endure afflictions” with being a faithful preacher of the gospel, as in 2 Tim. 4:5. Furthermore he urges the young preacher to “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Tim. 4:16). It may not occur to the minister that he is to preach so as to save himself. After all, the Scriptures now and again warn against “eye service,” being “men pleasers,” and “loving the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

This is to say the preacher is to please God, not the people; he is to be God’s man rather than the elders’ man. The Yale professor may be right that this is difficult for the man who draws his pay from those he preaches to. His temptation is to water down what needs to be said or not to say it at all. The old saw is still true that he who pays the piper calls the tune. We have created a system that calls for the pulpit to provide what the people want to hear, not what they need to hear.

But it is not all the preacher’s fault. It is the people that support and preserve the system. They owe it to themselves and to God to make some changes in this regard, which must start by encouraging the preacher to be a man of God, by encouraging him to allow God to speak through him and to say what God wants him to say. And we must overcome this mentality that says, “He can’t please everybody,” and insist that as a man of God he is indeed to be prophetic and cry out against sin, even if that means pleasing nobody. Therein lies our answer: stand by the preacher when he pleases nobody.

Part of our problem in Churches of Christ/Christian Churches is that the elders usually have sovereign rule over the minister. They can call him in on Sunday afternoon and fire him, and the congregation that pays him be hanged. The elders don’t have to give an

account to anyone. So the minister has to satisfy, pacify, and coddle the elders. Only if he can keep the elders satisfied is his job secure. Oftentimes this is but a few men in a congregation of hundreds. This is sheer nonsense, and it is contrary to the New Testament which teaches democratic principles.

The hiring and firing of the minister should be in the hands of the congregation, led by the elders. Other denominations have learned better than we have ways to give the preacher at least a little more freedom. The Nazarene Church, for instance, has in its polity the rule that a preacher cannot be hired or fired but by the consent of something like three-fourths of the voting members. A large congregation might have a plan whereby 10% of the congregation, selected by the people, half of whom should be women, would serve as an "executive committee" for the hiring and firing of the preacher and other staff people.

We are suspicious of such democratic liberties as voting in the church, so we resort to an oligarchy that allows decisions to be made by a self-perpetuating eldership that functions not unlike a corporate board. Since power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely, power in the church should be widely distributed. Elders are the leaders, true, but they are to be leaders among equals.

This of course will not completely solve the problem that the Yale professor is talking about, but among us it will at least help. The final answer can only come from the hearts of the preachers and the churches. The preachers must be men of God (period), and let come what may. If they will speak up unafraid, the people might respond with like courage. But if they must "leave the payroll," as the professor puts it, so be it. That way they save themselves. And the people must be God's people and put away their itching hears and encourage preachers to preach the whole counsel of God in season and out of season. I take it that that means when it is pleasing and when it isn't.

It all calls for a change of heart. Each of us must ask himself or herself, "Do I really want to hear what I need to hear or only what I want to hear?" —*the Editor*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

Ouida and I were both convinced that Mother Pitts was dying recently when she had a labored breathing attack. Ouida was on one side of her holding her hand and assuring her of our love. I held her other hand and was telling her it was all right to go, to turn loose and let God do it, that the Lord would meet her. She looked at me with studied eyes. When she rallied and seemed to be better off for it, Ouida kidded me with, “She was going to die but you talked her out of it!” We admitted to each other that while we realize she needs to go on, we were reluctant to let her go. To again use my analogy of waiting at the station platform with her, it was a case of the train coming through but not stopping.

In September I was guest speaker at a congregation that was new to me, the Pecan Grove Church of Christ in Greenville, Texas. It is always a delight to meet new sisters and brothers in Christ. I was impressed with the sign they had out front. In the space that ordinarily has the minister’s name it read, “Every Member A Minister.” They say they might eventually employ a preacher for certain functions, but not in a way that would interfere with the concept of every member a minister.

During September I was also with the Tucker Street Church in Dyersburg, Tn. for a weekend. Some of these people who are of Church of Christ background I have known for 20 years, and I know the dramatic story of their struggle to be free. But most of the congregation is not from the Church of Christ, and the minister is from the Christian Church. They are a great congregation with their focus on Christ, growing in numbers and in the Spirit. The use of instruments do not bother the Church of Christ folk who were withdrawn from by their old congregation for having strange notions about the Holy Spirit. This was Pat Boone’s sister’s old church, and the story goes back to those incredible times when the Church of Christ not only disenfranchised Pat and Shirley Boone but all Pat’s family as well, including his parents in Nashville! The old timers agreed that we have made some progress since then —but they are not so sure that the Church of Christ in west Tennessee has changed all that much! They tell the story that when Pat’s sister was brought before the elders to answer a questionnaire that she responded with, “What grade do I have to make?” Shades of John Knox! Read about him in this issue.

In October I will again return to Princeton, N. J. where I was a student. To my amazement there are now 20 students at Princeton Seminary from the Stone-Campbell heritage, representing all three branches. I will discuss with them how our heritage relates to the challenges faced by the church of the 21st century. At the same time I will be with the Liberty Street Church of Christ in Trenton for an anniversary celebration.

I am reading with appreciation Henry E. Webb’s *In Search of Christian Unity: A History of the Restoration Movement*, which is recently off the press. Concerning Churches of Christ he says that if we face the challenges of the future seriously we are going to have to

reexamine our position on instrumental music. Prof. Webb would be interested in knowing that such a reexamination has already begun. I know of at least one large congregation among us where the subject is being quietly but seriously studied, and they have concluded that we should not only not make the instrument a test of fellowship but should consider using it. “We are missing too much by not having it,” their minister says. He says that 80% of the congregation would accept the use of instrumental music. But they will not be pushy. Beside this, there is a general disenchantment with our position on this old controversy. Hardly any of our leaders, certainly those under 50, any longer believe the old arguments. One would be hard pressed these days to hear the subject even mentioned any more in most all our mainline congregations.

Our non-instrument position these days is strictly a tradition. But we will adopt instruments very slowly because of that tradition, first, I would say, in the wedding chapel, then for special music, the area in which we are most denied. Our first big step, however, is to concede that we have been wrong on this question, especially in making it a biblical issue and a test of fellowship. The tradition of acappella singing will in some manner always have a place in our worship, even if we one day also have instruments, and I think it should. Traditions are useful so long as they do not enslave us.

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READER'S EXCHANGE

I finished your *Stone-Campbell Movement.* It is the best of all the histories of this movement I have read, and I suppose I have read most of them. This is my conclusion: Stone and the Campbells said that we are not to require anything of people unless there is a clear expression of it in the Scriptures. As time went on this freedom plea was changed to a bondage cry that said we are not to allow anything unless there is a command, example or necessary inference for it. That change broke down a great and a good movement and has brought division after division. *—Frank Poynor, Portales, NM.*

After all of these years it is time for the Stone-Campbell churches to accept each other as fellow Christians and let the differences take care of themselves over time. I didn’t think I would live to see the beginning of such a movement. I don’t believe the Lord will let it die, provided He can find those of us who are willing to try to continue it. *—Ralph E. Davis. Kirkwood. Mo.*

Keep us in your prayers. The challenges are enormous. I have seen miracles. I take great comfort in Jer. 32:17: “Ah, Lord God! Behold, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for you.” My wife asked me the other day what my six favorite magazines were. I listed *Restoration Review* first. *—Larry O. Toney, pastor, First Christian Church (Disciples), New Kensington, Pa.*

I want you to know that my brother Harry Sutton died on Sept. 6. We wept but we also rejoiced. At his last Sunday at church he had to quit teaching in the middle of his class because he was so weak. We remember in one of his prayers he quoted what Ouida said about Carl Ketcherside, “He stays with his knitting,” and he often quoted you in class. My greatest grief is that when the churches in the county got wind that he was no longer against an instrument in worship for those who chose to use it they quit calling on him to pray. He always prayed such a beautiful prayer from the heart, so when he attended revivals all over the county they would call on him. But they hadn’t for years. He was hurt, but he shouldn’t have been. It is the ones that treated him that way that I feel *sorry* for.- *Tena Carmack, Curve, Tn.*

(This dear brother, Harry Sutton, called me to preach at his country church in Tennessee when I was still in college. We were friends for a half century. Our condolence! to his dear wife Jewel. As for those who rejected Harry because he refused to draw the line on his brothers in Christ over matters of opinion, I can only hope that they will die as free in Christ as he did. May God forgive us our petty sectarianism! —*Ed.*)

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BOOK NOTES

Edward Fudge’s *The Fire That Consumes* has deservedly received favorable responses as a biblical and historical study of the doctrine of final punishment. A British journal described it as persuasive. $21.00 postpaid.

Two classics by Louis Cochran have also been reissued, *The Fool of God*, a historical novel on the life of Alexander Campbell, and *Raccoon John Smith*, a novel based on the life of the famed Kentucky preacher. They are $11.95 each.

If you haven't read a history of our Movement or even if you have, we suggest you read our own study, *The Stone-Campbell Movement.* which continues to receive commendation from many of the thousands who have read it. If you send your check in advance we pay the postage, only $21.95 for a book of over 700 pages.

Olan Hicks' *What the Bible Says About Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage* was out of print for awhile, and we are pleased that we can again send you a copy for only $14.95. It is a liberating book for those who have been burdened with impossible demands on the subject.

For $14.00 we will send you a copy of the last bound volume of this journal, which covers two years, 1987-88, under the title The Sense of Scripture: Studies in Interpretation. We have seven bound volumes still available, 1977 -88, and if you purchase them all the price is $65.00.

Subscription Rates: $6.00 per year or two years for $10.00. In clubs of three or more (sent to separate addresses by us) $4.00 per name per year. Foreign: $8.00 yr.

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